

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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FOR: USINFO FOR IOP/M, IPS/PE, IEU; STATE FOR EUR/NE,
ROOM 5141 AND EUR/RPM

E.O. 11652 N/A
SUBJECT: BELGIAN MEDIA REACTION

THE MIDDLE EAST, THE FRENCH ELECTIONS AND THE DOLLAR'S
WEAKNESS WERE DISCUSSED IN THE BELGIAN PRESS THIS WEEK.

MIDDLE EAST:
COMMENTING MARCH 21 ON PREMIER BEGIN'S TRIP TO THE U.S.
FOR WHAT IT TERMED "CRUCIAL" TALKS WITH PRESIDENT CARTER,
DE STANDAARD WROTE: "THANKS TO THE PALESTINIAN COMMANDO
ACTION OF MARCH 11 IN WHICH 32 ISRAELIS WERE KILLED AND
THE SUCCEEDING ISRAELI OCCUPATION OF SOUTH LEBANON, BEGIN
CAN LOOK FORWARD TO THE TALKS WITH MORE CONFIDENCE THAN
WOULD HAVE BEEN THE CASE OTHERWISE. A LITTLE OVER A
WEEK AGO, ISRAEL WAS PUSHED COMPLETELY ONTO THE DEFENSIVE
DIPLOMATICALLY.... THE ISRAELI INVASION OF SOUTHERN
LEBANON HOWEVER HAS DIVERTED ATTENTION FROM THE BASIC
PROBLEMS OF THE NEAR EAST AND SHIFTED IT TO THE IMMEDIATE
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SOUTH LEBANESE PROBLEM. AT THE INITIATIVE OF THE U.S.
THE SECURITY COUNCIL SUNDAY EVENING APPROVED A RESOLUTION
UNDER WHICH THE ISRAELI TROOPS SHOULD BE REPLACED BY UN
BLUE HELMETS. BUT WITHOUT ISRAELI COOPERATION THIS CAN-
NOT BE DONE, SO THAT CARTER HAS BECOME THE REQUESTING
PARTY RATHER THAN THE DEMANDING PARTY AS ONE WEEK AGO....
IT WILL NOT BE EASY FOR PRESIDENT CARTER TO CONVINCE

BEGIN THAT HE MUST AGREE WITH THE SECURITY COUNCIL
DECISION OF SUNDAY NIGHT.... AND SO LONG AS THAT ISSUE
IS NOT SETTLED, IT WILL UNDOUBTEDLY DIVERT ATTENTION FROM
FUNDAMENTAL ISSUES AND PERPETUATE THE DEADLOCK IN THE NEAR
EAST.... IF, BY THEIR RAID, THE PALESTINIANS WANTED TO
SABOTAGE THE PEACE GAME WHERE THEY WERE STANDING ON THE
SIDELINES, THEY HAVE ACHIEVED THEIR PURPOSE."

LA LIBRE BELGIQUE WROTE MARCH 21 THAT "ALTHOUGH ISRAEL'S
DESIRE TO ENSURE ITS SECURITY, PARTICULARLY AFTER THE
PALESTINIAN RAID OF LAST MARCH 11 NEAR TEL AVIV, IS UNDER-
STANDABLE, IT IS VERY DOUBTFUL THAT THE METHODS USED TO
ACHIEVE THIS SECURITY ARE REALLY EFFECTIVE.... THE IN-
CREASINGLY POWERFUL WEAPONS AT THE DISPOSAL OF MODERN
ARMIES MAKE ILLUSORY THE SECURITY WHICH THE ISRAELIS BE-
LIEVE THEY WILL ACHIEVE BY OCCUPYING TERRITORIES....
THE BEST BORDER, I.E. THE SAFEST ONE, IS THE ONE WHICH IS
RECOGNIZED BY THE NEIGHBOR.... BUT THIS REQUIRES THE GRANT
TO THE PALESTINIANS OF A TERRITORY. WITHOUT THAT ISRAEL
WILL NEVER BE SAFE."

FRENCH ELECTIONS:

IN LE SOIR JEAN POCHET COMMENTED MARCH 21 FROM WASHINGTON
ON U.S. REACTION TO THE OUTCOME OF THE FRENCH ELECTIONS
THAT "..."THE UNOFFICIAL ATTITUDE OF THE GOVERNMENT WAS A
VERY DISCRETE BUT FERVENT 'KEEP THE COMMUNISTS OUT'.
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WASHINGTON HAS AVOIDED LIKE THE PLAGUE ANY VISIBLE INTER-
FERENCE IN THE 'DOMESTIC AFFAIRS OF A FRIENDLY NATION'
REMEMBERING AT THE RIGHT MOMENT THE MALAISE CAUSED BY ITS
RECALLING 'FOR CONSULTATION' ITS AMBASSADOR TO ROME AT THE
TIME OF THE LAST ITALIAN CABINET RESHUFFLE. BUT ALTHOUGH
THE STATE DEPARTMENT RIGHTLY ASSESSED THAT A VICTORY OF
THE LEFT WAS UNLIKELY, EVEN IMPOSSIBLE, NOW THE SCOPE OF
THE DEFEAT WORRIES IT.... WITH THE NEW DISTRIBUTION OF THE
SEATS AT THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY THEY FEAR IN THE AMERICAN
CAPITAL THAT THE UNIONS WHICH SEEM TO HAVE MITIGATED MOST
OF THEIR DEMANDS DURING THOSE LAST TWO MONTHS MAY GIVE
THEIR CLAIMS A FREE HAND...."

LA LIBRE BELGIQUE THE SAME DAY WROTE THAT "SUCH PERSISTENCY
ON BEHALF OF THE FRENCH ELECTORATE TO REJECT THE LEFT
RESULTS UNQUESTIONABLY FROM ITS INNERMOST ALLERGY FOR THE
COMMUNIST PARTY," WHILE LA CITE COMMENTED THAT "IT IS
OBVIOUS THAT IN THE WESTERN WORLD A FRANCE WITH COMMUNIST
MINISTERS WOULD HAVE BEEN, AT LEAST FOR A WHILE, IN AN
UNCOMFORTABLE PSYCHOLOGICAL SITUATION. EVEN WITH A LEFTIST
GOVERNMENT THAT WOULD HAVE CHOSEN TO APPLY ITS SOCIAL
REFORMS WITH EXTREME PRUDENCE A FINANCIAL ISOLATION WOULD

PROBABLY HAVE RESULTED FOR FRANCE."

LE SOIR MARCH 20 WROTE, HOWEVER, THAT "THIS ELECTION HAS NOT SOLVED ANYTHING IN DEPTH.... THE INCUMBENT AND RE-ELECTED MAJORITY FINDS ITSELF FACED WITH THE SAME PROBLEMS WHICH FOR THREE YEARS IT HAS BEEN UNABLE TO SOLVE.... THOSE WHOM THE ALTERNATIVE FRIGHTENED HAVE WON. FOR THEM THE WORSE HAS BEEN AVOIDED. BUT WHAT THE BEST IS IS FAR FROM SURE...."

THE DOLLAR:

SECRETARY OF STATE FOR THE FLEMISH REGIONAL ECONOMY MARK EYSKENS WAS QUOTED INDIRECTLY BY LA LIBRE BELGIQUE AND LE SOIR MARCH 17 AS HAVING TOLD THE BELGIAN SENATE THAT
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THE U.S. GOVERNMENT WON'T DO ANYTHING TO SUPPORT THE DOLLAR UNTIL ENERGY LEGISLATION IS ADOPTED BY CONGRESS. THE SAME DAY DE STANDAARD HAD AN INTERVIEW WITH MINISTER OF ECONOMIC AFFAIRS WILLY CLAES IN WHICH CLAES ARGUED AGAINST DEVALUATION OF THE BELGIAN FRANC, BUT, HE IS QUOTED AS SAYING "THE QUESTION, NEVERTHELESS, ARISES AS TO HOW LONG BELGIUM WILL BE ABLE TO HOLD OUT, IF WEST-GERMANY AND JAPAN CONTINUE TO REFUSE THE ACCELERATION OF THE WORLD'S

ECONOMY. AND THIS ALSO RAISES THE PROBLEM OF THE DOLLAR.
WHAT IS MOTIVATING THE UNITED STATES? ITS ATTITUDE IS
INCOMPREHENSIBLE." ITEM.

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